

Date: 10 April 2016  
 Opposition: Stoke City  
 Competition: League

Times	Telegraph	BBC
Guardian	Mirror	Sentinel
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10 April 2016

## THE TIMES

Liverpool are emerging at last from Suarez's sizeable shadow

It has taken almost two years, involved several players, featured a number of expensive excursions into the transfer market, cost the job of one manager and dominated the thinking of his successor, but for the first time since Luis Suarez's departure, Liverpool have attacking options that allow them to hurt opponents. Stoke City's resistance might have been weak but the ruthlessness with which they were punished by Daniel Sturridge and Divock Origi fuelled the theory that Jurgen Klopp's forward thinking is beginning to pay off.

It was Brendan Rodgers' inability to reconfigure Liverpool's attack after Suarez's move to Barcelona that ultimately cost him his job, but blessed with the same players, Klopp's work on the training ground and that of his medical team in the treatment room are having a transformative effect on the forwards he inherited. After scoring only 22 goals in the 19 Premier League games they played up to December 31, Liverpool have scored 28 in the dozen they have played so far this year. Klopp now has genuine competition for places, which is bringing out the best in his attacking players. Suddenly Klopp has a very different problem. Not only does he have to decide which of his in-form players he selects, he also has to determine which is most deserving of praise. On this occasion, he wanted Sturridge to take the limelight despite the England international being outscored by Origi, the substitute, by two goals to one. The Liverpool manager singled out some of the qualities that Sturridge is perhaps less renowned for, in particular the guidance he offered Sheyi Ojo, a teenage winger, who was making his first league start. "It is normal you want to speak about Divock but I want to talk about Daniel," Klopp said. "He worked really hard and scored a brilliant goal but he was always really smart in the way he defended. He has to defend smart, closing spaces, and he also played a very important role in keeping Ojo in the game so I am really happy with his performance."

Whereas Origi started and Sturridge began on the bench against Borussia Dortmund three days earlier, their roles were reversed for Stoke's latest attempt to win a league game at Anfield for the first time since 1959. Sandwiched in between the two legs of Liverpool's Europa League quarterfinal against the Bundesliga side, Klopp made seven changes to the side that drew 1-1 in Germany. Neither side had a great deal to play for and it showed in the opening stages, which were notable only for the high winds which made playing conditions testing. Not that the weather had anything to do with Stoke switching off at a free kick after eight minutes, a failing that allowed Liverpool to take the lead. Three visiting players idled as James Milner squared the ball to Alberto Moreno and the full back made the most of the space by hammering a 20-yard shot past Jakob Haugaard, the Stoke goalkeeper.

Moreno's first goal since December 2014 allowed Liverpool to settle but they were also undone by a set piece, for the second time in two games after not conceding from any in the previous two months, as Stoke scored a league goal at Anfield for the first time since 1983. If the concession of the free kick was unnecessary, Martin Skrtel tripping Peter Crouch in a non-threatening position, the way it was defended was abject. Milner's audible shout of "hold the f\*\*\*ing line" as Shaqiri centred counted for nothing as Kolo Toure played Bojan onside and the midfielder headed past Simon Mignolet. Crouch then thought that he had marked his return to Anfield with a goal when he sent another header past Mignolet, this time from Erik Pieters' wide delivery, only to see his attempt ruled out for offside. It was a crucial, but wholly correct, decision as Liverpool restored their advantage shortly after as two of the players who had been drafted into their starting XI combined to make the most of the opportunity afforded to them. Sturridge's close-range header underlined his ability to find space and exploit it, but the talents of Ojo, the creator, are less well known -- a situation which, on this evidence, is likely to change. The fleetness of foot that allowed the teenage winger to elude Shaqiri was eye-catching in itself but the quality of Ojo's delivery was even more impressive. Ojo was replaced by Origi at halftime and the forward scored within five minutes of being introduced, meeting Milner's cross with an emphatic header that rendered Haugaard a bystander. Origi's second was more contentious, in the sense that it was not clear whether he was crossing or shooting when he sent the ball into the penalty area from a wide position and it found the far corner. Klopp, though, was in no doubt. "I was not surprised," he said. "He really wanted to shoot, it was not a cross."

According to Klopp, Origi has gone up a shirt size due to weight training which has added considerable bulk. The combination of increased strength, belief and experience is making him the type of powerful forward that defenders don't enjoy playing against. It certainly proved too much for Ryan Shawcross, who kicked out at Origi after being outstripped by him, and also for Pieters, who was driven to distraction to such an extent that he took his frustrations out on his own bench before being replaced. All of a sudden, Liverpool have an attack that gives the opposition problems rather than their own manager.

Liverpool (4-3-2-1): S Mignolet 7 -- N Clyne 6, M Skrtel 6, K Toure 6, A Moreno 8 -- J Milner 7, K Stewart 7, J Allen 8 (sub: L Leiva, 78min) -- S Ojo 7 (sub: D Origi, 46 8), R Firmino 6 (sub: A Lallana, 63 7) -- D Sturridge 8. Substitutes not used: D Ward, D Lovren, P Coutinho, B Smith.

Stoke City (4-2-3-1): J Haugaard 5 -- P Bardsley 5, R Shawcross 5, P Wollscheid 5, E Pieters 4 (sub: M Muniesa, 83) -- G Cameron 5, G Imbula 5 -- X Shaqiri 7 (sub: M Diouf, 72), I Afellay 6, Bojan 7 (sub: Joselu, 72) -- P Crouch 6. Substitutes not used: S Given, S Ireland, C Adam, D Teixeira. Booked: Pieters, Shawcross.

## the guardian

Liverpool's Divock Origi continues hot streak in win over sorry Stoke  
 Jürgen Klopp remained uncharacteristically restrained as the goals mounted up for the biggest home win of his Liverpool reign. The performance in the technical area reflected his team's out on the pitch – calm, carefree and ultimately in control, the perfect Sunday stroll before the Europa League showdown with Borussia Dortmund. "I picked a team to win," he said. "But I didn't think it would be like this."

For Stoke City, an encouraging start disintegrated into a display of dissent and dismal defending at Anfield. Mark Hughes substituted Erik Pieters moments after a heated exchange with his hapless left-back and was left ruing not only key absentees but a defeat that damages his club's hopes of qualifying for Europe next season. "The story of the game for us unfortunately was our ability to stop the ball coming into our box and that we lacked the ability to clear them when they did," he said.

For Liverpool, the stories were positive and plentiful. Divock Origi's impressive development continued with two goals. Daniel Sturridge was also on the scoresheet and showed a good understanding with his young strike partner as the home side dominated the second half.

Klopp could afford to rest several players before the quarter-final second leg against Dortmund – as did Thomas Tuchel for his side's 2-2 draw against Schalke – and give Sheyi Ojo and Kevin Stewart their full league debuts, partner Kolo Touré alongside Martin Skrtel in central defence and watch his balanced, flexible team cruise to victory.

"Divock has learned everything from me," Klopp joked when asked about the Belgium international's rise in confidence and productivity. "When he came here everything was different for him at first. Expectations were really high because he is a really highly rated striker but he had a lot of little injuries. He used the last injury to work on his body strength and now he has to wear a different shirt. You can see the confidence too. His second goal was only possible with confidence." Thursday's exertions in Germany and Sunday's selection could have disrupted Liverpool's rhythm but there was no evidence as they leapfrogged Stoke in the table. The home side were ahead early through Alberto Moreno's first goal in 65 games and a collective lapse in concentration among the Stoke defence. Phil Bardsley was penalised for a foul on James Milner, who played a quick free-kick inside to Moreno. No defender came near the Liverpool left-back as he controlled, took aim and beat the unconvincing goalkeeper Jakob Haugaard from 20 yards. One bright first-half spell apart, Stoke were weak and passive but in Xherdan Shaqiri, and his set-piece delivery in particular, possessed one player to unnerve Liverpool. The Switzerland international produced an audacious flick to release Bardsley down the right and, though Joe Allen intercepted on that occasion, and many others, Shaqiri created Stoke's equaliser with an inviting free-kick from their next attack. Three Stoke players were kept onside by Touré as Shaqiri's cross swung over and Bojan Krkic ghosted in unmarked to send a glancing header beyond Simon Mignolet.

Remarkably, it was Stoke's first Premier League goal at Anfield and their first league goal here since 1983. It also confirmed that Liverpool's weakness at defending set pieces had returned. Klopp's team had gone two months without conceding from a set-piece until Mats Hummels's equaliser for Dortmund last Thursday. Now it is two in two games and but for Shawcross's poor header wide and Mignolet's fine save from Geoff Cameron, both from Shaqiri free-kicks, it would have been more.

Not that a Liverpool victory was ever in doubt from the moment Sturridge restored their lead. Credit for the second goal belonged to Ojo. The 18-year-old gave a glimpse of his potential by beating Shaqiri to the byline with skill and pace before floating a perfect cross towards the back post. Unmarked and with Stoke's defence awol once again, Sturridge could not miss with a close-range header. Hughes and Klopp were embroiled in an argument after Shaqiri won a free-kick for leaping over Moreno's challenge but the Stoke manager's ire should have been reserved for his players. They displayed no fight and little threat, save for a Peter Crouch goal correctly disallowed for offside, and the contest was over four minutes after the restart. Origi, Ojo's replacement, continued his excellent week with a fine header beyond Haugaard from Milner's cross from the right. Yet again, no Stoke player was near the scorer.

Roberto Firmino and Origi both went close to extending Liverpool's advantage before the latter delivered the fourth. The striker's powerful effort appeared intended for Sturridge's run across the six-yard box. He just failed to connect, but the ball flew beyond the Stoke keeper and inside the far post. "He really wanted to shoot, it was not a cross," Klopp said. "Even on the bench, I was not surprised." Man of the match Divock Origi (Liverpool)

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## The Mail

Origi moves to No1 in the charts for Klopp's reds

THE smile was wide, the hugs were given with added enthusiasm and the spring in his step was impossible to miss.

There was no disguising Jurgen Klopp's contentment as he headed for sanctuary shortly after the final whistle, as Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* boomed from the speakers. The reason was understandable after a Sunday afternoon stroll. On a day that had the potential to be seen as a distraction, Liverpool registered their biggest success at Anfield of his short reign, thrashing Stoke City 4-1. And the striker in whom he has placed great faith made another statement of intent. Divock Origi arrived on Merseyside last summer as a work in progress but he has blossomed to such an extent recently that Daniel Sturridge's position as Liverpool's first-choice forward is under threat. Another two goals here confirmed how rapidly Origi is developing.

'When he came here everything was different for him,' said Klopp. 'Expectation was high but he had a lot of little injuries. Now the most important thing for him is to stay fit. The last injury he used a little bit of body strength. Now he has to wear a different shirt. The first goal, set-piece, short corner, what a cross, what a header. Second goal is only possible with confidence.'

'He really wanted to shoot. It was not a cross. Even on the bench, I was not surprised.' Origi was the highlight for Klopp but there were others -- not least Sturridge (left), whose contribution was highlighted by his manager. Was it a need to placate the England international after leaving him out against Borussia Dortmund? Some will see it that way.

What Klopp will be looking at, however, is Liverpool's potency. They have scored 28 goals in the Barclays Premier League since January 1 -- more than any other club -- and there is no question Origi and Sturridge will have key roles to play on the huge night that beckons.

An idea of how big the Europa League quarter-final with Borussia Dortmund is could be gauged by the fact Klopp made seven changes to the team that had drawn 1-1 in Germany on Thursday. He gave first top-flight starts to youngsters Kevin Stewart and Sheyi Ojo.

Shuffling his pack, though, did not prevent Liverpool from making a rapid start. They took the lead in the eighth minute when Alberto Moreno took advantage of Stoke's dozing defence to thrash a 20-yard, dipping drive past Stoke keeper Jakob Haugaard following James Milner's quick free-kick.

Stoke responded by scoring their first goal at Anfield in a league game since 1983 after Xherdan Shaqiri hung a free-kick up and Bojan -- played onside by Kolo Toure -- was able to glance a header past Simon Mignolet.

Scurrying in midfield and snapping into tackles, Stoke's players made nuisances of themselves.

But the balance of the game swung firmly in the hosts' favour on 32 minutes when Moreno set Ojo on his way down the right flank and he hoodwinked Shaqiri, pushing the ball to one side then running the other before producing a perfect cross that Sturridge could not miss.

'It's normal you want to talk about Divock but I want to talk about Daniel. That was a really smart performance,' said Klopp, who won PS40 after drawing third-placed Vics Canvas in the players' Grand National sweep.

The goal deflated Stoke and their play became scruffy, with Mark Hughes unable to hide his frustration.

Erik Pieters was particularly culpable and, in the second half, he bickered with his manager to the extent that he was unceremoniously hauled off.

'The story of the game was our ability to stop the ball coming into our box and when we did we lacked the ability to stop them or clear them,' said Hughes.

'We feel 4-1 is a bit hard given what we did in the first half but you have got to have a full, 90-minute performance and we didn't have that.' Klopp chose to introduce Origi for Ojo immediately after the interval and his first contribution was to score Liverpool's third goal in the 50th minute, thumping in a header from Milner's cross.

Origi then put the gloss on matters when his shot from the right made its way into the corner of the hapless Haugaard's net.

It was, as Klopp knew only too well, the perfect way to prepare for the season's defining night.

## The Daily Telegraph

Sturridge the talking point again - but for right reasons

If Jurgen Klopp was evaluating how Daniel Sturridge would respond to his omission in midweek, he left Anfield reassured. Mood assessors and body-language experts have been convening on Merseyside to study the Liverpool striker, barely a week passing without his manager being quizzed on his striker's status, temperament, fitness and form.

On days like this, Klopp understands the fixation with the enigmatic but supremely talented centre-forward. Sturridge was outstanding as Liverpool ensured there was no expensive compromise in domestic policy now trophy priorities have shifted to Europe.

The England striker scored, he linked the play and - perhaps most thrillingly for the Liverpool coach - his work-rate was exceptional as he assumed senior status in a vastly changed line-up. Liverpool shrugged off an abject Stoke with an especially dominant second-half display, enabling Sturridge to exhibit his full repertoire.

How comforting it is for Klopp to prepare for Borussia Dortmund's arrival with so many dilemmas across his line-up. Divock Origi, preferred to Sturridge in midweek, also came off the bench to score twice. The pair worked so well in tandem it may not be a case of one or the other on Thursday, but you can understand why the manager might get tetchy when asked about who will be left out when it is the pleasure of having a genuine choice that matters most.

Klopp even sought to publicly volunteer his appreciation of the 26-year-old's effort. Classic manmanagement. "Usually, you ask me about Sturridge but I want to speak about him this time," he said.

"He worked really hard and it was a brilliant goal. He does not have to defend like Lucas Leiva, but he has to defend smart, closing spaces, so I am really happy with his performance."

Such acknowledgement reflected Sturridge thriving with the responsibility in a team selection that had both Thursday and, one suspects, a recent loss against Southampton in mind.

When Klopp kept the same lineup following the Europa League win over Manchester United two weeks ago, his players were running on empty. It was essential limbs were preserved for his former club in midweek, although initially it seemed the passions of a subdued crowd were also being saved. That would change in the second half.

Klopp made seven changes from the side who drew at Signal Iduna Park, although the inclusion of Sturridge and Roberto Firmino ensured this was hardly a weak lineup. Winger Sheyi Ojo made his first Premier League start, as did mid-fielder Kevin Stewart, who would most likely have featured more but for injury following impressive FA Cup appearances. The youngsters performed well.

Although teenager Ojo started nervously and would last only 45 minutes, he sparked in the buildup to Sturridge's 32nd-minute headed goal. He tricked Phil Bardsley before clipping a cross on to the striker's forehead six yards out, restoring an advantage Liverpool had surrendered when their vulnerabilities from set-pieces were exposed again.

Xherdan Shaqiri clipped in a free-kick and Bojan was free to glance a 22nd-minute header past Simon Mignolet. There was similar indecision each time Stoke had a free-kick and corner in the first half, but the visitors did not bother to break sweat after half-time.

Alberto Moreno had struck Liverpool ahead from 25 yards after only eight minutes, the generous appraisal being goalkeeper Jakob Haugaard was undone by a ball that caught in the wind. Liverpool began the second half just as well, Origi benefiting from more indecision from Haugaard to convert James Milner's 50th-minute cross.

The inevitable fourth goal arrived when Origi cut in from the left to swerve past Haugaard. Mark Hughes, the Stoke manager, admitted his team were in "damage limitation" mode from then on.

A verbal altercation between Hughes and full-back Erik Pieters summed up Stoke's toils, the Dutchman duly substituted without even an icy glare from his manager. "Those things happen. We needed to be a bit more solid and I felt I needed to make a change, which I did," said Hughes.

Klopp had no such concerns after the most emphatic home league win since he took over. The Premier League table does not make pleasant reading, but his side have been playing well for several weeks.

Forward on form 3 Daniel Sturridge has scored three goals in his last six games for Liverpool.

34 Sturridge has scored 47 goals for Liverpool - but 34 of them came in his first 16 months at the club, with 13 coming in the last 22 months.

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## THE INDEPENDENT

Origins on the double as Reds punish Potters

Liverpool will go into the home leg of their Europa League quarter-final tie against Borussia Dortmund next Thursday night buoyed by the perfect result against a side whose own European aspirations suffered a chastening blow.

Stoke's run of just one defeat in seven Premier League games had propelled them towards the qualification places for next season's Europa League -potentially at Liverpool's expense.

But despite seeming to break their Anfield hoodoo with a Capital One Cup win here in January -which still ended with an aggregate defeat on penalties -Stoke have never won a top-flight game at Liverpool.

And normal service continued as a weakened Liverpool side won only a fourth home league game since the appointment of Jurgen Klopp as manager last October, with Daniel Sturridge and substitute Divock Origi, with two, sharing three goals between them in their duel to be recognised as the main man.

Klopp, who had preferred Origi as his loan striker in the 1-1 first leg draw in Dortmund, showed his hand ahead of the Anfield return by making seven changes to the side that had started in Germany.

Two of those were enforced with Jordan Henderson sustaining a knee injury that may keep him out for the remainder of the season and threaten his involvement in Euro 2016 and Emre Can starting a two-match domestic ban.

That left holes in central midfield plugged by Joe Allen and Kevin Stewart, who, like winger Sheyi Ojo, was handed a first Premier League start.

And Liverpool's re-shaped side could not have made a better start on an afternoon of firsts as full-back Alberto Moreno accepted James Milner's rolled free-kick to crack his opening goal of the season past Jakob Haugaard from 25 yards.

Moreno went close again with a forward burst ended by Haugaard's blocking save but Stoke always carried a threat going forward and levelled after 22 minutes.

The impressive Xherdan Shaqiri was invariably their catalyst and when he floated in the perfect free kick, Bojan got behind Liverpool's back line to nod home and claim Stoke's first league goal at Anfield since 1983.

The visitors looked the better side at that point with Liverpool particularly vulnerable in the air with Anfield old boy Peter Crouch constantly on the prowl.

But 13 minutes before half time Liverpool went back in front thanks to Ojo's big moment as the teenager delightfully beat Shaqiri and crossed for Sturridge to head in from close range.

That was to be Ojo's last meaningful contribution as he was replaced at the break by Origi and that switch by Klopp had paid off within five minutes as Liverpool went 3-1 up to effectively secure only their second home league win since beating Leicester City on Boxing Day.

Despite the return from injury of captain Ryan Shawcross, Stoke's defending was poor for most of the afternoon and they were slow to react again as Origi was left un-marked to head in a cross from Milner following a short corner routine.

Simon Mignolet made a decent save at the other end from a Geoff Cameron header but it was largely one-way traffic as Liverpool racked up four goals under Klopp at Anfield for the first time when Origi's cross-shot was allowed to bend inside the far post with 25 minutes to go.

## DAILY MIRROR

ORIGINAL WIN! Divock's double a timely warning to Reds' Euro rivals  
 LIVERPOOL 4

Moreno 8, Sturridge 32, Origi 50, 65

STOKE 1

Bojan 22

THE nervous-looking Dortmund scouts perched in front of the press scribbled furiously through this game.

Yet they could have condensed their copious notes to just two comments. Liverpool have got a goals menace in them...and but still have a Dracula-style fear of crosses!

On that basis, and on the evidence of this demolition of Stoke, Thursday's Europa League showdown against Borussia should be a spectacular, emotional ride.

If Jurgen Klopp has done one thing above all else since his arrival, it is to infuse his Reds attack with a latent threat whenever they go forward... no matter who he seems to select.

Hence the compelling sight of Daniel Sturridge combining eloquently with Roberto Firmino and promising youngster Sheyi Ojo in the first half, and then Divock Origi doing exactly the same with Adam Lallana after the break.

It brought a third goal in five starts for Sturridge who, for all his detractors still has a touch of class, and a fine double for Origi, who is on the verge of announcing himself as a very special talent.

As Klopp said later, the 20-year-old Belgian has stepped up a level, by building himself up in the gym, and proving an intimidating physical presence Stoke could not handle.

"He learnt everything from me!" the manager joked.

"His development is because of his potential, and you see what confidence can do. He used his last injury to add a bit of body strength and now everybody can see he needs a new kit!"

No wonder the Dortmund scouts looked wide-eyed as they left early, given their own team looked less than defensively accomplished in last Thursday's first leg. Despite Klopp making seven changes, Liverpool now have the beating of any side, as Stoke found to their cost, and even their German opponents will surely feel.

Yet they also have a weakness at the back Klopp feels he can't truly address until the summer. He rested Mamadou Sakho and Dejan Lovren, but replacements Kolo Toure and Martin Skrtel struggled at set-pieces.

Liverpool led through an Alberto Moreno goal - his first in 65 matches - as the defender slammed home after quick thinking by James Milner.

Little Bojan escaped to plant a free header in to equalise for Stoke.

But it was the brilliance of young Ojo on his first Premier League start which turned the game when he supplied Sturridge at the far post.

Origi replaced Ojo at the interval - and took Stoke apart almost immediately. First he ghosted on to Milner's great delivery to steer home unmarked at the far post, and then he took the ball on the left, bulldozed past Phil Bardsley and cut inside to deliver a fine curling finish.

Stoke boss Mark Hughes said: "We were unable to stop the ball coming into the box, and when it did we were unable to defend it properly."

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### Irresistible forward line give Reds near-perfect preparation for Dortmund - and Klopp a bunch of dilemmas

This was the calm before the storm. Liverpool warmed up for Thursday night's titanic showdown with Borussia Dortmund by demolishing a woeful Stoke City side with a minimum of fuss at Anfield. What was briefly a tricky afternoon turned into a stroll in the park as Jurgen Klopp celebrated the biggest home triumph of his tenure. In terms of preparation for the Europa League quarter-final second leg against the Bundesliga high-flyers, it was just about perfect.

All boxes were ticked. No injuries and a plethora of positives for the beaming manager to reflect on. The likes of Philippe Coutinho, Dejan Lovren and Mamadou Sakho put their feet up as a much changed line up ensured that momentum was maintained on the back of that highly impressive 1-1 draw in the Westfalenstadion. As an attacking force, Liverpool were irresistible as Daniel Sturridge and substitute Divock Origi tormented the Potters' hapless backline. Having struggled to hit a cow's backside with a banjo before Christmas, Liverpool are now the Premier League's top scorers in 2016. Famine has turned to feast. **'Sturridge delivers emphatic response... but what about Dortmund?'**

Sturridge delivered an emphatic response to being out of the first leg against Dortmund. There was no chance of him being hauled off early this time. Not in this kind of mood. Sturridge, who nodded home the Reds' second, broke off the shackles as he delivered a display which oozed class and the Kop showed their appreciation for his efforts. Whether it's enough to earn him a start on Thursday remains unclear because Origi has already nailed down a spot.

What a week it's been for the young Belgian frontman, who grabbed the precious away goal against Dortmund. Brought on for the second half against Stoke, Origi simply carried on where he had left off in Germany. The 20-year-old is enjoying such a purple patch that even his crosses have started finding the net.

Origi oozed confidence as he scored twice and could easily have walked away clutching the matchball. Stoke simply couldn't handle his pace and power. Ryan Shawcross was reduced to shamelessly kicking lumps out of him.

How Klopp must be tempted to go for the jugular and play Origi and Sturridge in tandem against Thomas Tuchel's men. The strike duo did most of the damage but there were other significant contributions.

#### 'Allen plays himself into Thursday'

Alberto Moreno, who was one of only three outfield players to be retained following the draw with Dortmund, flourished after opening the scoring in style with his first goal for 16 months. The Spaniard had his hands full with Xherdan Shaqiri for company but rose to the challenge.

The tireless James Milner took his tally for the campaign to 10 assists, while fellow midfielder Joe Allen passed his audition for Thursday night with flying colours. It's been a hugely frustrating season for Allen, who was making just his fourth league start of the campaign. Injuries have hampered his progress and so far he's been unable to convince Klopp that he should be part of his long-term plans.

It's telling that the Wales international is reaching the final year of his contract and there is no offer of a new deal on the table. However, captain Jordan Henderson's knee injury has opened the door for Allen to play a telling role during the run-in and he didn't let anyone down. Repeatedly, he broke up play and put Liverpool on the front foot with his range of passing. When he was substituted late on, the ovation he received was richly deserved. Emre Can will return from his domestic ban to face Dortmund and he will surely have Allen for company.

#### 'Klopp vindicated by handing out debuts'

Klopp's decision to hand full Premier League debuts to rookies Sheyi Ojo and Kevin Stewart also paid off. Ojo has so much potential and the 18-year-old winger showcased it when he skipped past Shaqiri to put Liverpool's second goal on a plate for Sturridge. Stewart's impact was less eye-catching but the manner in which he cruised through 90 minutes in the holding midfield role was impressive, especially considering it was his comeback after ankle ligament damage.

Liverpool got off to a dream start as they took the lead inside eight minutes. Milner's quick thinking caught Stoke napping as he rolled a free-kick short to Moreno. The full-back took a touch to steady himself and hammered a fierce 20-yarder which arched beyond Jakob Haugaard. It was Moreno's first goal since he netted in the 4-1 win over Swansea City in December 2014.

During the opening quarter of the contest Stoke barely got a kick with Mark Hughes' men way off the pace. However, they were gifted a foothold in the contest when once again a set-piece proved the Reds' undoing. It started with Martin Skrtel's clumsy foul on Peter Crouch and ended with Shaqiri whipping in a free-kick which the unmarked Bojan nodded past Mignolet. Remarkably, it was Stoke's first league goal at Anfield since Paul Bracewell netted back in 1983.

#### 'Liverpool put right a season-long statistic'

The only subsequent moments of alarm for Liverpool came from the same source as the Potters pumped a succession of long balls towards Crouch, who had a goal disallowed for offside. That defensive vulnerability didn't cost the Reds because they were such a threat at the other end. Twelve minutes before the break they were back in front as Ojo delivered for Sturridge to net his eighth of the season.

The second half was a procession as Stoke were put to the sword. The impact of Origi, who replaced Ojo, was instant as he rose to head home

Milner's pin-point cross.

The chances kept on coming. Roberto Firmino twice went close before Origi nodded narrowly wide after Sturridge's backheel had released the rampaging Moreno. Liverpool hadn't scored four at Anfield all season but they put that right. Origi burst away from Phil Bardsley down the left and his curling cross eluded the keeper and nestled in the far corner.

The Reds cruised to the finish line. Bring on Dortmund.

#### MATCH FACTS

**Liverpool:** Mignolet, Clyne, Toure, Skrtel, Moreno, Allen (Lucas 77), Milner, Stewart, Ojo (Origi 45), Firmino (Lallana 63), Sturridge.  
 Not used: Ward, Lovren, Coutinho, Lucas, Smith.

**Stoke City:** Haugaard, Bardsley, Shawcross, Wollscheid, Pieters (Muniesa 83), Cameron, Imbula, Shaqiri (Diouf 71), Bojan (Joselu 71), Afellay, Crouch  
 Not used: Given, Ireland, Adam, Teixeira.

Referee: Mark Clattenburg Attendance: 43,688 Goals: Moreno 8, Bojan 22, Sturridge 32, Origi 50, Origi 65, Bookings: Pieters, Shawcross,

**Man of the match:** Daniel Sturridge. Shone on his return to the starting line up. The perfect response to being left out in Europe.



### Cold hand of history rests on shoulder yet again

#### Liverpool 4, Stoke City 1

**Moreno (8), Sturridge (32), Origi (50,65); Bojan (22)**

THE cold hand of history rested long and hard on the shoulder of Stoke City here at Anfield – by way of a patronising "never mind, better luck next season."

Familiar words of consolation in this part of the world, sadly, as Stoke have now lost 27 and drawn four of their last 31 league visits since their last victory back in 1959. Conditions could hardly have been more favourable after the confidence gleaned from their victory in open play at Anfield in the League Cup semi back in late January. Not to mention no fewer than seven Liverpool changes – including the introduction of a couple of genuine rookies for first Premier League starts – as Jurgen Klopp clearly took his two Europa League ties against Borussia Dortmund far more seriously than a humdrum Premier League fixture against Stoke City. Stoke themselves played a shorter game of musical chairs, one prompted in large part by Glenn Whelan's absence with a back injury, as skipper Ryan Shawcross and Xherdan Shaqiri returned from injury, while Peter Crouch was recalled against his old club after Joselu suffered sickness leading into the game.

City will be kicking themselves after failing to more ruthlessly exploit Liverpool's aerial deficiencies, particularly from quality set pieces, while Mark Hughes might be the one doing the kicking when he re-lives the goals with which the home side romped through arguably their easiest 90 minutes in eight Premier League fixtures against Stoke at Anfield.

Stoke were moaningly in the contest after Bojan scored for a second successive week for 1-1, but the quality of their defending ensured that moment was no more than a false dawn. Liverpool's victory sees them leapfrog Stoke in the table, leaving the vanquished with pride, rather than Europe, to play for now.

The afternoon could hardly have begun worse for Stoke as their tentative start was punished in only the eighth minute following some truly crass defending. Three Stoke players dawdled in a virtual huddle, passing the time of day almost, as James Milner rolled a left-wing free-kick to the unmarked Alberto Moreno and he let fly with a swerving shot from around 25 yards that careered through a flimsy crowd of players between ball and goal to leave Jakob Haugaard pawing at thin air. He could have got a hand to it, true, but it would have been some save to prevent Moreno's first goal since December 2014.

Shaqiri, who must take most blame for ignoring Moreno, switched off again two minutes later and was relieved to see the offside flag render Moreno's low cross academic. Stoke were under the thumb, even from one of their own corners, as Liverpool broke down upfield and a right-wing ball intended for Daniel Sturridge was cut out in the nick of time by a rapidly retreating Phillip Wollscheid.

City desperately needed to settle and at least Shaqiri's attacking qualities were more to the fore than his defensive frailties approaching the quarter-mark. And the point was emphatically illustrated when he floated a deep free-kick into the Liverpool area for Bojan, stealing a yard on Kolo Toure, to glance his header into the keeper's left-hand corner as The Kop sat open mouthed.

Shaqiri continued to occupy Liverpool, Klopp particularly, as the big German remonstrated angrily with all and sundry after the Stoke winger took a tumble near the dugouts. Erik Pieters quickly made amends for the day's first yellow card by scampering down the left and crossing with pace and purpose, but the offside flag rose along with Crouch as the big fella headed home via the inside of the keeper's right-hand post. Stoke's promising comeback into the game was rudely interrupted just after the half-hour, however, when newcomer Sheyi Ojo skirted round Shaqiri down the left and dinked one into the middle for Sturridge to head home from two yards for 2-1. The dose was very nearly repeated at the other end for 2-2 when Shaqiri whipped over his second terrific free-kick of the half, but Shawcross saw his header flash wide of the far post with Simon Mignolet a beaten and grateful man. The visitors remained fearless going forward as Mignolet was forced into his first save by diving to his right to beat away Gianelli Imbula's fierce drive from outside the box.

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Stoke began the second half with justifiable ambitions for a draw, at least, in a game whose defending was promising to yield further goals in the second 45. And we didn't have to wait long. A short corner routine on the Liverpool right saw the ball flung in at pace for Origi to plant a completely free header past Haugaard's hopeful dive.

Stoke were briefly teetering on disarray as Pieters then dallied long enough over a clearance for Roberto Firmino's block to send the ball looping over Haugaard before clearing his bar by about a foot.

At least there was always hope from Stoke's free-kicks as Shaqiri chipped the dead ball into the box for the unmarked Geoff Cameron to force a back-tracking Mignolet to tip over.

Questions over Haugaard's reactions were answered positively just before the hour when he saved smartly at his near post to prevent Firmino's cracking snapshot hitting the bullseye for Liverpool's fourth.

Liverpool remained hot for that fourth, however, and Haugaard was left horribly exposed when Sturridge's cheeky flick released Moreno for the cross and Origi for a free header skimming wide of a near open goal.

Stoke's worst fears were realised in the 65th minute – a worryingly early stage of proceedings to concede a fourth – as Haugaard was again exposed by events in front of him.

It was Origi, his second-half influence continuing apace, who teed up a wicked left-wing cross that saw Sturridge run across the goalkeeper's eye line to leave him reacting too late to prevent the ball nestling in the far corner.

The kind of goal that leaves any goalkeeper looking far worse than he actually was.

Neither side showed any great appetite thereafter as Liverpool were happy with 4-1 - and Stoke happy to keep it 4-1.

There wasn't even to be any touch of romance at the very end when Crouch's lofted effort narrowly missed the target for what would have been his first league goal since that 6-1 mauling of his old club 11 months ago.

What painful revenge Liverpool have since exacted.



Substitute Divock Origi scored twice as Liverpool made short work of Stoke to leapfrog their opponents and go eighth in the Premier League. A long-range shot from Alberto Moreno put the Reds ahead before Bojan escaped his marker to nod in Stoke's equaliser. Daniel Sturridge put away Sheyi Ojo's cross to regain the lead and Origi then headed in, before his attempted cross drifted in after the break.

Stoke rarely threatened apart from a late run from Mame Biram Diouf. Origi or Sturridge? Or both? By making seven changes to his starting line-up, including first Premier League starts for Ojo and Kevin Stewart, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp revealed his priorities for the season's run-in.

The lure of European silverware - and the resulting Champions League place - means their Europa League quarter-final second leg against Borussia Dortmund on Thursday now takes precedent over their vanishingly slim chances of gate-crashing the Premier League top four. Klopp opted to play Origi as a lone striker in the first-leg draw in Germany and Sturridge looked lively in the first half as he attempted to win back his place for the return against Dortmund.

After Moreno's opener, the England international rattled the advertising hoardings with a powerful low shot and showed excellent instincts to get on the end of Ojo's cross to score. But Origi also took his chance to shine, adding muscular movement to the Liverpool attack after coming on at the break. The Belgian might have had a hat-trick had he managed to keep a header on target from a Moreno cross. The two worked well in tandem as Sturridge completed 90 minutes for the first time since 28 February, but surely it is a case of either or against Dortmund on Thursday.

Stoke's wait goes on

Stoke have now won just three times in 61 league meetings at Liverpool. Before the match, Potters' manager Mark Hughes had noted, rather hopefully, that that win - like this match - was on Grand National weekend, But his side were relegated to rank outsiders as soon as Liverpool moved two goals clear early in the second half. Hughes instead will have to take the long-term view. His side are in the same ninth place that they managed in in his previous two seasons at the club, seven points off last season's total of 54 with five games remaining. Record signing Giannelli Imbula showed he can provide a platform for Stoke's attack to shine, but his good work went to waste as the likes of Ibrahim Afellay and Xherdan Shaqiri faded from the game.

Understudies to principals

Klopp's fourth home league win since taking charge in October took the Reds to within nine points of fourth-placed Manchester City, but perhaps more valuable were the lessons he will have learned about some of his fringe players.

Joe Allen, who is likely to step up from understudy to first-team regular after Jordan Henderson's injury, used the ball intelligently while Ojo showed electric pace to beat Shaqiri and set up Sturridge's goal.

Klopp also got several reminders of his side's weak points though as Ryan Shawcross and Philipp Wollscheid won headers in dangerous areas just as Sft 7in Bojan did to score his goal.

Man of the match - Joe Allen

What they said:

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp: "Today, I'm really proud. We made changes and it was a completely new formation. I'm sure the players have never played together before in this line-up. "Stoke played 70 to 80% long balls to Peter Crouch, and you have to be tuned into that. It was a smart performance. "Divock is still a young lad. We have to be patient. He can play together with Daniel. "There's absolutely no doubt about that. We hope it stays like this that we have two strikers available like this because we have a big number of games to go."

Stoke manager Mark Hughes: "Once goals go in, it becomes difficult. It could have become embarrassing for us. It was damage limitation in the end. "I was reasonably happy with the first-half performance, even though we were behind. But we kept on letting ourselves down by not switching on when the ball went dead. "It was a difficult day, where we didn't acquit ourselves well enough. "Today's result has hurt us obviously. We allowed Liverpool to go above us and teams around us are picking up points. But when we have a setback, we almost always bounce back, and we need to do that."

The stats you need to know

Liverpool have won five of their last six league meetings against Stoke, with the other game being a 6-1 loss on the final day of last season.

Liverpool netted four goals in a game at home for the first time under Jurgen Klopp. Daniel Sturridge has been directly involved in seven goals in seven Premier League appearances against Stoke with four goals and three assists.

Alberto Moreno scored his first Premier League goal since December 2014, ending a run of 42 games without a goal. James Milner has provided more assists than any other Liverpool player in all competitions this season with 10.

Bojan scored in consecutive Premier League appearances for the second time this term. The Spaniard had gone 11 games in all competitions without a goal before this run. Divock Origi, who netted his first Premier League brace, has scored in back-to-back games for Liverpool for the first time.

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Match ends, Liverpool 4, Stoke City 1.  
 90'+3' Second Half ends, Liverpool 4, Stoke City 1.  
 90'+2' Attempt blocked. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Adam Lallana.  
 90'+1' Corner, Stoke City. Conceded by Kolo Touré.  
 90'+1' Attempt blocked. Peter Crouch (Stoke City right footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Mame Biram Diouf.  
 90' Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 90' Foul by Ibrahim Afellay (Stoke City.  
 89' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Ryan Shawcross.  
 89' Attempt blocked. Adam Lallana (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Kevin Stewart.  
 82' Substitution, Stoke City. Marc Muniesa replaces Erik Pieters.  
 82' Ryan Shawcross (Stoke City is shown the yellow card.  
 78' Substitution, Liverpool. Lucas Leiva replaces Joe Allen.  
 77' Kevin Stewart (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 77' Foul by Giannelli Imbula (Stoke City.  
 76' Foul by James Milner (Liverpool.  
 76' Mame Biram Diouf (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 75' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 75' Foul by Peter Crouch (Stoke City.  
 74' Adam Lallana (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 74' Foul by Peter Crouch (Stoke City.  
 74' Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 74' Foul by Geoff Cameron (Stoke City.  
 71' Substitution, Stoke City. Joselu replaces Bojan.  
 71' Substitution, Stoke City. Mame Biram Diouf replaces Xherdan Shaqiri.  
 70' Kevin Stewart (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 70' Foul by Peter Crouch (Stoke City.  
 67' Foul by Adam Lallana (Liverpool.  
 67' Erik Pieters (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 66' Attempt missed. Xherdan Shaqiri (Stoke City left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the left. Assisted by Bojan with a headed pass.  
 66' Attempt missed. Kevin Stewart (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is high and wide to the left.  
 65' Goal! Liverpool 4, Stoke City 1. Divock Origi (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle and long range on the left to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Alberto Moreno.  
 63' Substitution, Liverpool. Adam Lallana replaces Roberto Firmino.  
 61' Attempt missed. Divock Origi (Liverpool header from very close range is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Alberto Moreno with a cross.  
 59' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Erik Pieters.  
 58' Attempt missed. Kevin Stewart (Liverpool header from the centre of the box misses to the left. Assisted by James Milner with a cross following a corner.  
 57' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Jakob Haugaard.  
 57' Attempt saved. Roberto Firmino (Liverpool right footed shot from a difficult angle on the right is saved in the bottom right corner. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.  
 56' Philipp Wollscheid (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 56' Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.  
 54' Corner, Stoke City. Conceded by Simon Mignolet.  
 54' Attempt saved. Geoff Cameron (Stoke City header from the centre of the box is saved in the top centre of the goal. Assisted by Xherdan Shaqiri.  
 53' Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.  
 53' Giannelli Imbula (Stoke City wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 50' Goal! Liverpool 3, Stoke City 1. Divock Origi (Liverpool header from very close range to the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner with a cross following a corner.  
 49' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Philipp Wollscheid.  
 48' Attempt blocked. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is blocked. Assisted by Divock Origi.  
 47' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 47' Foul by Ryan Shawcross (Stoke City.  
 46' Erik Pieters (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 46' Foul by Divock Origi (Liverpool.  
 Second Half begins Liverpool 2, Stoke City 1.  
 45' Substitution, Liverpool. Divock Origi replaces Sheyi Ojo because of an injury.  
 45'+2' First Half ends, Liverpool 2, Stoke City 1.  
 45'+1' Attempt saved. Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool right footed shot from outside the box is saved in the centre of the goal.  
 45'+1' Attempt blocked. Sheyi Ojo (Liverpool left footed shot from the centre of the box is blocked. Assisted by Nathaniel Clyne.  
 42' Attempt missed. Phil Bardsley (Stoke City right footed shot from outside the box misses to the left. Assisted by Geoff Cameron.  
 42' Attempt saved. Giannelli Imbula (Stoke City left footed shot from outside the box is saved in the bottom left corner. Assisted by Geoff Cameron.  
 41' Attempt missed. Xherdan Shaqiri (Stoke City left footed shot from outside the box is too high from a direct free kick.  
 40' Foul by Sheyi Ojo (Liverpool.  
 40' Phil Bardsley (Stoke City wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 39' Attempt missed. Ryan Shawcross (Stoke City header from the centre of the box misses to the right. Assisted by Xherdan Shaqiri with a cross following a set piece situation.  
 38' Hand ball by Nathaniel Clyne (Liverpool.  
 37' Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 37' Foul by Ibrahim Afellay (Stoke City.  
 36' Foul by Joe Allen (Liverpool.

36' Phil Bardsley (Stoke City wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 35' Foul by Roberto Firmino (Liverpool.  
 35' Ibrahim Afellay (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 34' Roberto Firmino (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 34' Foul by Giannelli Imbula (Stoke City.  
 32' Goal! Liverpool 2, Stoke City 1. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool header from very close range to the high centre of the goal. Assisted by Sheyi Ojo with a cross.  
 31' Offside, Stoke City. Phil Bardsley tries a through ball, but Peter Crouch is caught offside.  
 28' Attempt missed. Daniel Sturridge (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box is close, but misses to the right. Assisted by Kevin Stewart.  
 27' Offside, Stoke City. Erik Pieters tries a through ball, but Peter Crouch is caught offside.  
 27' Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 27' Foul by Xherdan Shaqiri (Stoke City.  
 26' Erik Pieters (Stoke City is shown the yellow card for a bad foul.  
 26' Sheyi Ojo (Liverpool wins a free kick on the right wing.  
 26' Foul by Erik Pieters (Stoke City.  
 25' Foul by Alberto Moreno (Liverpool.  
 25' Xherdan Shaqiri (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 24' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Erik Pieters.  
 22' Goal! Liverpool 1, Stoke City 1. Bojan (Stoke City header from the centre of the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by Xherdan Shaqiri with a cross following a set piece situation.  
 21' Foul by Martin Skrtel (Liverpool.  
 21' Peter Crouch (Stoke City wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 20' Offside, Stoke City. Geoff Cameron tries a through ball, but Peter Crouch is caught offside.  
 18' Hand ball by Kevin Stewart (Liverpool.  
 16' Corner, Stoke City. Conceded by Kolo Touré.  
 11' Offside, Liverpool. Kolo Touré tries a through ball, but Alberto Moreno is caught offside.  
 11' Joe Allen (Liverpool wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 11' Foul by Peter Crouch (Stoke City.  
 10' Foul by Kevin Stewart (Liverpool.  
 10' Giannelli Imbula (Stoke City wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 8' Goal! Liverpool 1, Stoke City 0. Alberto Moreno (Liverpool left footed shot from outside the box to the bottom right corner. Assisted by James Milner following a set piece situation.  
 8' James Milner (Liverpool wins a free kick on the left wing.  
 8' Foul by Phil Bardsley (Stoke City.  
 7' Kevin Stewart (Liverpool wins a free kick in the attacking half.  
 7' Foul by Giannelli Imbula (Stoke City.  
 5' Corner, Liverpool. Conceded by Phil Bardsley.  
 4' Attempt missed. Ibrahim Afellay (Stoke City left footed shot from the left side of the box is too high.  
 3' Ibrahim Afellay (Stoke City wins a free kick in the defensive half.  
 3' Foul by Sheyi Ojo (Liverpool.  
 2' Attempt missed. Bojan (Stoke City right footed shot from outside the box misses to the right. Assisted by Peter Crouch.  
 First Half begins.  
 Lineups are announced and players are warming up.